

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Chile: Amnesty International and the Pinochet case

Since the military coup in Chile on 11 September 1973, Amnesty International as an international movement has supported the work of the relatives of victims of human rights violations committed during the military government of Augusto Pinochet.

At the time Amnesty International received hundreds of reports of human rights violations and initiated investigations. An Amnesty International research mission went to Chile in November 1973.-

The organization's report published in 1974 sparked an international campaign demanding investigations into all accusations of human rights violations, those responsible to be brought to justice and full reparations to be given to the victims and their families.

In the years after the military coup, the organization has interviewed hundreds of victims of the Pinochet government and its records contain the most complete files on individual victims anywhere in the world outside Chile.

Amnesty International sections and structures and the membership as a whole played a vital role when Augusto Pinochet challenged his detention.

Amnesty International was the first international non-governmental organization to alert European governments to exercise their responsibilities under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Ill-treatment when it became known that Augusto Pinochet was visiting Europe in September 1998.

The organization prepared a number of legal submissions for the House of Lords which were fundamental in getting international law as framework for the decision rather than common law precedents.

Amnesty International mobilized its membership to bring pressure on the British Government to allow the extradition of Augusto Pinochet to Spain and went to court to force the Home secretary to disclose the medical advice on which at the end he denied it. In this case, Amnesty International won a landmark ruling.

The 1978 decree law, known as the Amnesty Law, is still in force in Chile thirty years later. It can still be used by members of the armed forces accused of responsibility for systematic and widespread human rights violations committed between 11 September 1973 and 10 March 1978 to evade justice.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has ruled that it is incompatible with the obligations of the Chilean state under international law and that Chile must ensure that Decree Law No. 2.191 does not continue to hinder the investigation, prosecution and punishment of those responsible for human rights violations.

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